



Children's Book List that Embeds Race Equity and Social Justice

Early childhood is a powerful time to support children's identity development while scaffolding their understanding of and commitment to equity and social justice that they build on throughout their lives.

In a child's small world books and stories expand their understanding of the value for people who are different from themselves. This is a great first step to ensure that we all appreciate the richness of diversity and a world where everyone is valued.

Exposing children to diverse children's literature supports their development across domains while disrupting implicit bias, building confidence in their identities, and laying the foundation for conversations around equity and justice with their peers and communities. The following list of recommended children's literature represents diversity in regard to race, gender, family structure, neuro-divergence, language, culture, class and ability. This list is organized by age: birth to five, three to age eight.

Books for Children from Birth to Three (as children develop a familiarity with some of these books they will want to keep reading them, well into the following years.)

- And Tango Makes Three authors: Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell; illustrator: Henry Cole
 - At the penguin house at the Central Park Zoo, two penguins named Roy and Silo were a little bit different from the others. But their desire for a family was the same
- Be Boy Buzz author: Bell Hooks; illustrator: Chris Raschka
 - Here a tight, exuberant story from two award-winning creators that captures the essence and energy of what it means to be a boy. Chris Raschka's soulful illustrations buzz with a force that is the perfect match for Bell Hooks' powerful words.
- Bell's Knock Knock Birthday author: George Parker; illustrator: Sam Orchard
 - Bell is having a birthday, and all their friends and family are coming to celebrate! A simple counting book with lots of noises to make alone or together as the guests arrive with gifts and treats for the birthday Bell.
- Dream Big, Little One author and illustrator: Vashti Harrison
 - This book features 18 trailblazing black women in American history. Among these women, you'll find heroes, role models, and everyday women who did extraordinary things - bold women whose actions and beliefs contributed to making the world better for generations of girls and women to come.



- Giraffes Can't Dance author: Giles Andreae; illustrator: Guy Parker-Rees
 - Gerald the giraffe wants nothing more than to dance. With crooked knees and thin legs, it's harder for a giraffe than you would think. Gerald is finally able to dance to his own tune when he gets some encouraging words from an unlikely friend.

- Hair Like Mine author and illustrator: LaTashia M. Perry
 - A fun and easy read following a little girl who doesn't like that her naturally curly hair looks different from the other kids around her. On her quest to find someone with hair like hers, she soon realizes we are all unique and special in our own way.

- Holdin' Pott author: Chandra Ghosh Ippen; illustrator: Erich Ippen Jr.
 - A worn pressure cooker and a sweet little pot learn new ways of dealing with difficult feelings. Little Pott is watching and wants to be just like him, but when you're little and the heat is on really high, it's hard to keep the lid on and hold tough stories and feelings inside.

- Homemade Love author: Bell Hooks; illustrator: Shane W. Evans
 - Her Mama calls her Girlpie-a sweet treat, homemade with love. And when Girlpie makes a mistake, the love of her mother and father lets her pick up the pieces and make everything right again.

- I'm Jay Let's Play author: Beth Reichmuth; illustrator: Nomy Lamm
 - An exciting story about Jay's morning at preschool playing with friends. I'm Jay, Let's Play models gender fluidity as a normal and delightful part of the lives of young children.

- Our Skin: A First Conversation about Race authors: Megan Madison and Jessica Ralli; illustrator: Isabel Roxas
 - Based on the research that race, gender, consent, and body positivity should be discussed with toddlers on up, this read-aloud board book series offers adults the opportunity to begin important conversations with young children in an informed, safe, and supported way.



- Skin Like Mine author: LaTashia M. Perry; illustrator: Bea Jackson
 - From the Creators of *Hair Like Mine*, *Skin Like Mine*, the second book in the *Kids Like Mine* Series, is a fun, easy-to-read for beginners as well as advanced readers. An entertaining yet creative way to address and celebrate diversity among young children.
- Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes author: Mem Fox; illustrator: Helen Oxenbury
 - With rhythmic, rhyming text that's made for repeat reads, and luminous watercolor illustrations of little ones from diverse backgrounds, this book is a universal ode to lovely, lovable babies.
- The Snowy Day author and illustrator: Ezra Jack Keats
 - The quiet fun and sweetness of Peter's small adventures in the deep, deep snow is perfect for reading together on a cozy winter day.
- Think Big, Little One author and illustrator: Vashti Harrison
 - Featuring eighteen women creators, ranging from writers to inventors, artists to scientists, this board book adaptation of *Little Dreamers: Visionary Women Around the World* introduces trailblazing women.
- What Riley Wore author: Elana K. Arnold; illustrator: Linda Davick
 - Gender-creative Riley knows just what to wear for every occasion during a busy week with family and friends. This charming picture book is a gentle exploration of self-expression and source of encouragement for being true to oneself despite the expectations of others.

Books for Children from Three to Eight

- 47,000 Beads authors: Koja Adeyoha and Angel Adeyoha; illustrator: Holly McGillis
 - Peyton loves to dance, and especially at pow wow, but her Auntie notices that she's been dancing less and less. When Peyton shares that she just can't be comfortable wearing a dress anymore, Auntie Eyota asks some friends for help to get Peyton what she needs.
- A Salmon for Simon author: Betty Wateron; illustrator: Ann Blades
 - Simon, a Native American boy, has been trying all summer to catch a salmon. But when he gets his chance, Simon no longer wants to keep it--it's too strong and beautiful!



- All Are Welcome author: Alexandra Penfold; illustrator: Suzanne Kaufman
 - Discover a school where—no matter what—young children have a place, have a space, and are loved and appreciated.
- Annie’s Plaid Shirt author: Stacy B. Davids; illustrator: Rachael Balsaitis
 - Annie loves her plaid shirt and wears it everywhere. But one day her mom tells Annie that she must wear a dress to her uncle's wedding. Annie is miserable. She feels weird in dresses. Then Annie has an idea.
- Be Good to Eddie Lee author: Virginia Fleming; illustrator: Floyd Cooper
 - Christy's mother always tells her to be good to Eddie Lee, a neighborhood child with Down's Syndrome. But Christy wants to run and play -- and not worry about Eddie Lee tagging along. One hot summer day, though, Eddie Lee takes Christy to a secret place in the woods and teaches her that beautiful things can be found in unexpected places.
- Donovan’s Big Day author: Leslea Newman; illustrator: Mike Dutton
 - Donovan's two moms are getting married, and he can't wait for the celebration to begin. After all, as ringbearer, he has a very important job to do.
- Dress Like a Girl author: Patricia Toht; illustrator: Lorain Tu-Dean
 - A diverse cast of slumber party participants considers the most time-honored traditions for how to dress. Uplifting and resonant, and with a variety of interests ranging from sports to science to politics, this book is sure to inspire any young girl, instilling the idea that the best way to dress like a girl is the way that makes you feel most like YOU!
- Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story author: Kevin Noble Maillard; illustrator: Juana Martinez-Neal
 - Told in lively and powerful verse by debut author Kevin Noble Maillard, *Fry Bread* is an evocative depiction of a modern Native American family, vibrantly; illustrator: Pura Belpre Award winner and Caldecott Honoree Juana Martinez-Neal.
- Hair Love author: Matthew A. Cherry; illustrator: Vashti Harrison
 - Tender and empowering, Hair Love is an ode to loving ones natural hair — and a celebration of daddies and daughters everywhere.



- Happy to be Nappy author: Bell Hooks; illustrator: Chris Raschka
 - This book celebrates hair. Nominated for an NAACP Image Award, here is a buoyantly fun read aloud brimming with playful -- and powerful -- affirmations.
- I Am Enough author: Grace Byers; illustrator: Keturah A. Bobo
 - This gorgeous, lyrical ode to loving who you are, respecting others, and being kind to one another comes from *Empire* actor and activist Grace Byers and talented newcomer artist Keturah A. Bobo.
- I Love My Hair author: Natasha Anastasia Tarpley; illustrator: E. B. Lewis
 - In this imaginative, evocative story, a girl named Keyana discovers the beauty and magic of her special hair, encouraging black children to be proud of their heritage and enhancing self-confidence.
- It Feels Good to Be Yourself: A Book About Gender Identity author: Theresa Thorn; illustrator: Noah Grigni
 - Some people are boys. Some people are girls. Some people are both, neither, or somewhere in between. This sweet, straightforward exploration of gender identity will give children a fuller understanding of themselves and others.
- It's Okay to be Different author and illustrator: Todd Parr
 - It's Okay to Be Different cleverly delivers the important messages of acceptance, understanding, and confidence in an accessible, child-friendly format.
- Jabari Jumps author and illustrator: Gaia Cornwall
 - Jabari is definitely ready to jump off the diving board. In a sweetly appealing tale of overcoming your fears, Gaia Cornwall captures a moment between a patient and encouraging father and a determined little boy you can't help but root for.
- Jamie is Jamie: A Book About Being Yourself and Playing Your Way author: Afsaneh Moradian; illustrator: Maria Bogade
 - This book challenges gender stereotypes, shows readers that playing is fundamental to learning, and reinforces the idea that all children need the freedom to play unencumbered. A special section for teachers, parents, and caregivers provides tips on how to make children's playtime learning time.



- Julian is a Mermaid author and illustrator: Jessica Love
 - All Julian can think about is dressing up just like the ladies in his own fabulous mermaid costume: a butter-yellow curtain for his tail, the fronds of a potted fern for his headdress. But what will Abuela think about the mess he makes — and even more importantly, what will she think about how Julián sees himself?
- Last Stop on Market Street author: Matt De La Peña; illustrator: Christian Robinson
 - An inclusive ode to kindness, empathy, gratitude, and finding joy in unexpected places, and celebrates the special bond between a curious young boy and his loving grandmother.
- Marisol McDonald and the Clash Bash author: Monica Brown; illustrator: Sara Palacios
 - Marisol is turning eight, and it's time to plan a birthday party that will be fabulous, marvelous, and divine. She also hopes that Abuelita, who lives far away in Peru, will be able to come to the celebration.
- Not Quite Snow White author: Ashley Franklin; illustrator: Ebony Glenn
 - Tameika is a girl who belongs on the stage. So when her school announces their Snow White musical, Tameika auditions for the lead princess role. But the other kids think she's "not quite" right to play the role.
- Peter's Chair author and illustrator: Ezra Jack Keats
 - Peter has a new baby sister. "Let's run away, Willie," he says to his dog. And they do. This is a gentle and reassuring story about sibling rivalry.
- Princess Hair author and illustrator: Sharee Miller
 - Celebrate different hair shapes, textures, and styles in this self-affirming picture book! From dreadlocks to blowouts to braids, *Princess Hair* shines a spotlight on the beauty and diversity of black hair, showing young readers that every kind of hair is princess hair.
- Red: A Crayon's Story author and illustrator: Michael Hall
 - A blue crayon mistakenly labeled as "red" suffers an identity crisis. This funny, heartwarming, colorful picture book about finding the courage to be true to your inner self can be read on multiple levels, and it offers something for everyone.



- Saturday author and illustrator: Oge Mora
 - In this warm and tender story, join a mother and daughter on an up-and-down journey that reminds them of what's best about Saturdays: precious time together.
- Say Something author and illustrator: Peter Reynolds
 - An empowering story about finding your voice, and using it to make the world a better place. This picture book explores the many ways that a single voice can make a difference.
- Skin Again author: Bell Hooks; illustrator: Chris Raschka
 - This award-winning book, celebrates all that makes us unique and different and offers a strong, timely and timeless message of loving yourself and others.
- Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon author: Patty Lovell; illustrator: David Catrow
 - Be yourself like Molly Lou Melon no matter what a bully may do. Her grandmother has always told her to walk proud, smile big, and sing loud, and she takes that advice to heart.
- Sulwe author: Lupita Nyong'o; illustrator: Vashti Harrison
 - *Sulwe* has skin the color of midnight. In this stunning debut picture book, actress Lupita Nyong'o creates a whimsical and heartwarming story to inspire children to see their own unique beauty.
- Tar Beach author and illustrator: Faith Ringgold
 - Acclaimed artist Faith Ringgold seamlessly weaves fiction, autobiography, and African American history into a magical story that resonates with the universal wish for freedom, and will be cherished for generations.
- Teddy's Favorite Toy author: Christian Trimmer; illustrator: Madeline Valentine
 - A mom goes to great lengths to rescue her son's favorite doll in this delightful tribute to treasured toys—and mothers.
- The Colors of Us author and illustrator: Karen Katz Seven-year-old
 - Lena is going to paint a picture of herself. She wants to use brown paint for her skin. But when she and her mother take a walk through the neighborhood, Lena learns that brown comes in many different shades.



- The Crayon Box that Talked author: Shane Derolf; illustrator: Michael Letzig
 - "While walking through a toy store, the day before today, I overheard a crayon box with many things to say..." Once upon a time, Shane DeRolf wrote a poem. It was a deceptively simple poem, a charming little piece that celebrates the creation of harmony through diversity.
- The Day You Begin author: Jacqueline Woodson; illustrator: Rafael López
 - There are many reasons to feel different. We all feel like outsiders sometimes- and how brave it is that we go forth anyway. And that sometimes, when we reach out and begin to share our stories, others will be happy to meet us halfway.
- The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh author: Supriya Kelkar; illustrator: Alea Marley
 - Harpreet Singh has a different color for every mood and occasion, from pink for dancing to bhangra beats to red for courage. But when Harpreet's mom finds a new job in a snowy city and they have to move, all he wants is to be invisible.
- The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family author: Ibtihaj Muhammad and S.K. Ali; illustrator: Hatem Aly
 - A powerful, vibrantly illustrated story about the first day of school--and two sisters on one's first day of hijab--by Olympic medalist and social justice activist Ibtihaj Muhammad.
- They She He Me: Free to Be authors: Maya Gonzalez and Matthew SG; illustrator: Maya Gonzalez
 - Pronouns serve as a familiar starting point for kids and grown-ups to expand ideas about gender and celebrate personal expression with fun imagery that provides a place to meet and play.
- They She He, Easy as ABC authors: Maya Gonzalez and Matthew SG; illustrator: Maya Gonzalez
 - There's no room for stereotypes on THIS dance floor with spirited imagery that keeps names, clothes, hair and behavior fresh and diverse. The combination creates a playful and effortless practice to expand ideas about gender while learning the alphabet and makes being inclusive as easy as A-B-C.
- This Day in June author: Gayle E. Pitman; illustrator: Kristyna Litten
 - In a wildly whimsical, validating, and exuberant reflection of the LGBT community, *This Day In June* welcomes readers to experience a pride celebration and share in a day when we are all united.



- Try a Little Kindness author and illustrator: Henry Cole
 - This funny picture book, shows kids different ways to be kind. Each page features a different way to be a good person, like using proper manners, telling someone they are special, or sharing a treat!

- Unico Como Yo / One of a Kind Like Me author: Laurin Mayeno; illustrator: Robert Liu-Trujillo
 - Tomorrow is the school parade, and Danny knows exactly what he will be: a princess. It's a unique book that lifts up children who don't fit gender stereotypes, and reflects the power of a loving and supportive community.

- Visiting Day author: Jacqueline Woodson; illustrator: James Ransome
 - A young girl and her grandmother prepare for a very special day--the one day a month they get to visit the girl's father in prison. As the little girl and her grandmother get ready, her father, who adores her, is getting ready, too, and readers get to join the community of families who make the trip together, as well as the triumphant reunion between father and child.

- We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga author: Traci Sorell; illustrator: Frane Lessac
 - The word otsaliheliga (oh-jah-LEE-hay-lee-gah) is used by members of the Cherokee Nation to express gratitude. Beginning in the fall with the new year and ending in summer, follow a full Cherokee year of celebrations and experiences.

- We are the Water Protectors author: Carole Lindstrom; illustrator: Michaela Goade
 - Inspired by the many Indigenous-led movements across North America, this bold and lyrical picture book issues an urgent rallying cry to safeguard the Earth's water from harm and corruption.

- What Makes a Baby by Cory Silverburg; illustrator: Fiona Smyth
 - This is a children's picture book about where babies come from. Just as important, the story doesn't gender people or body parts, so most parents and families will find that it leaves room for them to educate their child without having to erase their own experience.

- When Aidan Became a Brother author: Kyle Lukoff; illustrator: Kaylani Juanita
 - A heartwarming book that will resonate with transgender children, reassure any child concerned about becoming an older sibling, and celebrate the many transitions a family can experience.



- Whoever You Are author: Mem Fox; illustrator: Leslie Staub
 - Every day all over the world, children are laughing and crying, playing and learning, eating and sleeping. Stirring words and bold paintings weave their way around our earth, across cultures and generations and remind children to accept differences, to recognize similarities, and--most importantly--to rejoice in both.

- William's Doll author: Charlotte Zolotow; illustrator: William Pene Du Bois
 - More than anything, William wants a doll. "Don't be a creep," says his brother. "Sissy, sissy," chants the boy next door. Then one day someone really understands William's wish, and make it easy for others to understand, too.

- You Matter author and illustrator: Christian Robinson
 - In this full, bright, and beautiful picture book, many different perspectives around the world are deftly and empathetically explored. Young readers brings young readers to engage with the world in a new way and see how everyone is connected, and that everyone matters.

- You Weren't With Me author: Chandra Ghosh Ippen; illustrator: Erich Ippen Jr.
 - Little Rabbit and Big Rabbit are together after a difficult separation, but even though they missed each other, Little Rabbit is not ready to cuddle up and receive Big Rabbit's love. This story was designed to help parents and children talk about difficult separations to help them reconnect and find their way back to each other.

If you have utilized books for children birth to age 8 that implicitly or explicitly touch equity and social justice please share them with us via email: alice.blecker@cuny.edu